

AUTHORSHIP AND DATES OF THE SOWERBYS' *MINERAL CONCHOLOGY OF GREAT BRITAIN*. Z.N.(S.)2483

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The Mineral Conchology of Great Britain, published between 1812 and 1845, is recognised to be of fundamental importance in British invertebrate palaeontology, containing as it does 640 plates and the descriptions of many fossil invertebrates, the majority of them new.

2. The work was issued irregularly in parts. On the covers of the individual parts, James Sowerby was given as the sole author up to Part 70 which has the printed date of 1 May 1823. Thereafter the covers include the phrase 'continued by J. de C. Sowerby'; Part 71 is dated 1 June 1823. In fact, James Sowerby died on 25 October 1822. An indication of the consequent change is given on the back cover of Part 66 (dated 1 November 1822) when 'Messrs. Sowerby' make the customary request for information previously requested by James Sowerby.

3. The dates of issue of the parts are of importance in questions of priority. In 1855 Renevier, after examining the set of parts in the British Museum and then consulting James de Carle Sowerby, published a list of dates for the parts of the *Mineral Conchology* in the *Bull. Soc. vaudoise Sci. nat.* but only referred to the plate numbers they contained. R. B. Newton, 1891, produced a table listing the parts and plates that were published in each year. Sykes in 1906, after examining the only known surviving set of the original wrappers, published a more detailed list that revised the plate groupings for parts in volumes 4, 5 and 6. Minor amendments to that list have been made by Cleavelly, 1974, who also emphasised that the printed dates cannot be entirely relied upon but have to be accepted without other evidence.

4. Renevier, 1855, attributed all the plates and descriptions up to pl. 383 (in Part 66, dated November 1822) to James Sowerby and all subsequent plates beginning with pl. 384 (in Part 67, dated January 1823) to J. de C. Sowerby. R. B. Newton, 1891 p. 323, stated that James Sowerby completed Nos. 1-65 and that after his death in 1822, the subsequent portions Nos. 66-113, were brought out by his son, James de Carle Sowerby. Sykes, 1906, did not refer to the change in authorship. Sherborn noted in his copy of Renevier's paper that plate 377 was the last described by James Sowerby and in his *Index animalium*, 1922-33, he gave J. de C. Sowerby as the author of all the new species described in Part 66 and subsequently.

5. In a published letter commenting on the pirated editions of the *Mineral Conchology* that were issued by Agassiz, J. de C. Sowerby, 1839,

gave an account of the method employed by the family in producing material for the work:

'The author James Sowerby being much more partial to the pictorial department, referred the principal part of the text to his two eldest sons, myself and Mr G. B. Sowerby, while he executed the plates wholly himself: and he continued his task regularly, even during a long and painful illness until within three or four days of his death in 1822... For some time previous to this sad event, it had fallen to my lot to describe the whole of the shells, and now I was obliged, in addition, to engrave the plates, a few only having been done in advance by my father.'

However, while this passage throws some light on the way in which the text was drafted it cannot be taken as giving conclusive evidence on authorship; there is no evidence either way whether James Sowerby read through or took responsibility for the publication of the parts issued in 1822 that carried his name on their covers.

6. It has been suggested (Cleevely, 1974) that in view of J. de C. Sowerby's remarks, the authorship of the seven new molluscan species described in Part 66, i.e. pl. 378: *Cypraea coccinelloides*, *C. retusa*, *C. avellana* [all now *Trivia*]; Pl. 379: *Auricula pyramidalis* [= *Melampus*]; Pl. 381: *Plagiostoma rusticum* and Pl. 382 *Plagiostoma laeviusculum* [both = *Lima*]; Pl. 383: *Gryphaea nana* [= *Nanogyra*] should be attributed to him. However, on the same basis it could be argued that for an undefined period before the death of James Sowerby the authorship of all new names ought to be attributed to James, James de Carle and G. B. Sowerby.

7. The change of authorship from James to J. de C. Sowerby is thus given by:

- (i) Renevier, 1855, as from pl. 384, dated 1 January 1823;
- (ii) Newton, 1891; Sherborn, 1922-33; and Cleevely, 1974, as from pl. 378. dated 1 February 1822 [but known to be later];
- (iii) the printed wrappers of the *Mineral Conchology* itself, as from pl. 408, dated 1 June 1823.

Such confusion is intolerable. Unless a ruling is given, future authors on the basis of published statements will be free to choose between these three alternatives and between the various sets of publication dates.

8. It has to be assumed that the only basis that Newton and Sherborn had for their action of changing the authorship of the species described in Part 66 is the evidence mentioned in paragraph 5 above and the date of James Sowerby's death. Neither of these authors provided any other information, nor is there any document in the volumes of Mss Notes & Correspondence relating to the *Evidence of Dates of Books* accumulated by C. D. Sherborn to substantiate his action.

9. In accordance with accepted practice the evidence of the covers as to authorship should be followed, but, to the best of our knowledge, for many years all authors have accepted either Renevier's or Sherborn's date

for the change of author. Arkell, 1934, p. viii, specifically followed Renevier and in fact, all recent usage has adopted the same practice, e.g.: Harmer, 1925; Arkell, [1930]; Cox & Arkell, 1948; the compilers of *British Cainozoic Fossils*, 1959 & 1975; H. B. Stenzel in the *Treatise of Invertebrate Palaeontology*, Part N, 1971; Duff, 1975.

10. It might be argued that a simple method of overcoming the difficulty over authorship would be to refer all new species in the *Mineral Conchology* to 'Sowerby' thereby avoiding the need for establishing the particular member in that family who was responsible. However, general usage over many years has been to differentiate between James and James de Carle Sowerby. Further, the adoption of such a practice would not allow for the differing degree of palaeontological understanding of father and son that in part was the result of the development of the science over the period during which the *Mineral Conchology* was published.

11. For the removal of uncertainty over authorship and to ensure stability of nomenclature, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is requested to rule that:

- (a) the publication dates of the pages and plates of the *Mineral Conchology of Great Britain*, 1812–1845, are to be taken as set out by Cleevely, 1974 (and reproduced here as an Appendix);
- (b) the change of authorship from James to James de Carle Sowerby is to be taken as stated by Renevier in 1855; thus, all species described and figured in vols 1 to 3 and vol. 4, pages 1–114 and plates 1 to 383 (parts 1 to 66) are to be attributed to James Sowerby and all those described and figured in subsequent pages and plates are to be attributed to James de Carle Sowerby.

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[*Cypraea avellana*: p. 620; *Cypraea coccinelloides*: p. 1376; *Plagiostoma laeviusculum*: p. 3380; *Gryphaea nana*: p. 4248; *Auricula pyramidalis*: p. 5334; *Cypraea retusa*: p. 5487; *Plagiostoma rusticum*: p. 5697.]
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APPENDIX

PUBLICATION DATES OF THE MINERAL CONCHOLOGY

Based on Sykes (1906) and the full set of wrappers in the B.M.(N.H.)

Vol. I: 18 Parts

Part	Plates	Pages	Date
1	1-3*	i-vii, 9-16	June 1st, 1812
2	4-9	17-32	Aug. 1st
3	10-15	33-48	Feb. 1st, 1813
4	16-21	49-60	Apr. 1st
5	22-27	61-72	June 1st
6	28-33	73*-76*, 73-84	Aug. 1st
7	33 bis, 34-38	73**-84**	Oct. 1st
8	39-44	85-96	Dec. 1st
9	45-50	97-108	Feb. 1st, 1814
10	51-56	109-124	Apr. 1st
11	57-62	125-140	June 1st
12	63-67**	141-152	Aug. 1st
13	68-73	153-168	Oct. 1st
14	74-78**	169-178	Dec. 1st
15	79-84	179-194	Feb. 1st, 1815
16	85-90	195-202	Apr. 1st
17	91-96	203-218	June 1st
18	97-102	219-234, & Index to Vol. [pp. 2]	Aug. 1st

Vol. II: 17 Parts

19	103-108	1-12	Oct. 1st, 1815
	Includes Supplementary Index to Vol. 1: 8		
20	109-114	13-28	Dec 1st
21	115-120	29-44	Feb. 1st, 1816
22	121-126	45-60	Apr. 1st
23	127-132	61-72	June 1st
24	133-138	[73-84] = 77-78	Aug. 1st
25	139-144	85-100	Oct. 1st
26	145-150	101-116	Dec. 1st
27	151-156	117-128	Feb. 1st, 1817
28	157-162	129-140	Apr. 1st
29	163-168	141-154	June 1st
30	169-174	155-166	Aug. 1st
31	175-180	167-178	Oct. 1st
32	181-184, 184A, 185-186 ϕ	179-194	Dec. 1st
33	187-192	195-210	Feb. 1st, 1818
34	193-198	211-224	Apr. 1st
35	199-203**	225-235 & Index to Vol. II: [237-239]	June 1st

N.B. Supplementary Index to Vol. II (pp. 240-251) appeared in No. 38 (Dec. 1st, 1818).

Vol. III: 18 Parts

36	204-209	1-16	Aug. 1st, 1818
37	210-215	17-28	Oct. 1st
38	216-221	29-40	Dec. 1st
39	222-227	41-48	Feb. 1st, 1819
40	228-233	49-58	Apr. 1st
41	234-239	59-68	June 1st
42	240-245	69-80	Aug. 1st
43	246-248*	81-88	Oct. 1st
44	249-253**	89-98	Dec. 1st
45	254-259	99-106	Feb. 1st, 1820
46	260-265	107-118	Apr. 1st
47	266-271	119-126	May 1st
48	272-277	127-138	May 1st, 1821
49	278-283	139-150	June 1st
50	284-289	151-162	July 1st
51	290-294**	163-166, 166*-167*	
		167-170	Aug. 1st
52	295-300	171-178	Sept. 1st
53	301-306	179-184 & Index to Vol. III: [185-186]	Oct. 1st

Supplementary Index to Vol. III published in No. 61 (June 1st, 1822): 187-194

Vol. IV: 17 Parts

54	307-312	1-8	Nov. 1st, 1821
55	313-318	9-16	Dec. 1st
56	319-324	17-24	Jan. 1st, 1822
57	325-330	25-32	Feb. 1st
58	331-336	33-44	Mar. 1st
59	337-342	45-56	Apr. 1st
60	343-348	57-68	May 1st
61	349-354	69-76	June 1st
62	355-359**	77-82	July 1st
63	360-365	83-90	Aug. 1st
64	366-371	89b, 91-96	Sept. 1st
65	372-377	97-104	Oct. 1st

66	378-383	105-114	Nov. 1st
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67	384-388**	115-122	Jan. 1st, 1823
68	389-394	123-130	Feb. 1st
69	395-400	131-138	Apr. 1st
70	401-407 φ	139-148 & Index to Vol. IV: [149-151]	May 1st

Supplementary index to Vol. IV published in No. 73 (Aug. 1st 1823): 153-160

Vol. V: 16 Parts

71	408-413	1-12	June 1st, 1823
72	414-419	13-20	July 1st
73	420-425	21-32	Aug. 1st
74	426-431	33-40	Sept. 1st
75	432-437	41-48	Nov. 1st
76	438-443	49-64	Dec. 1st
77	445-450	65-72	Jan. 1st, 1824
78	*444, 451-455	63*-64*, 73-78	Mar. 1st
79	456-461	79-90	Apr. 1st
80	462-467	91-98	May 1st
81	468-473	99-114	Aug. 1st
82	474-479	115-130	Nov. 1st
83	480-485	131-138	Dec. 1st
84	486-491	139-144	Mar. 1st, 1825
85	492-497	145-152	May 1st
86	498-503	153-168 & Index to Vol. V: [169-171]	Sept. 1st

* Note on cover = "this table was accidentally passed over in No. 77, which should have begun with it".

Vol. VI: 19 parts

87	504-509	1-12	Feb. 1st, 1826
88	510-515	13-28	Mar. 1st
89	516-521	29-36	Apr. 1st
90	522-527	37-44	May 1st
91	528-533	45-50	July 1st
92	534-539	51-76	Sept. 1st
93	540-545	77-86	Nov., 1st
94	546-551	87-96	Jan. 1st, 1827
95	552-557	97-108	Mar. 1st
96	558-562**	109-120	May 1st
97	563-568	121-132	Aug. 1st
98	569-574	133-140	Sept. 1st
99	575-580	141-156	Nov. 1st
100	581-586	157-164	Jan. 1st, 1828
101	587-591	165-184	June 1st
102	592-597	185-200	Aug. 1st
103	598-603	201-214	Jan. 1st, 1829
104	604-609	215-230, Title & Index to Vol. VI: [231-235]	July 1st, 1829
105	Portrait of James Sowerby: Preface to the General Indexes and the Systematical Index to the Six volumes by J. de C. Sowerby: [239]-250 Aug 1st, 1835		

Vol. VII: 8 Parts

106	610-613†	Alphabetical Index to the first 6 vols.: 1-11	March, 1840
107	614-618**	1-8	Oct. 1840
108	619-623**	9-16	Mar. 1841
109	624-628**	17-24	Feb. 1843
110	629-633**	25-40	Jan. 1844
111	634-638**	41-48	Mar. 1844
112	639-643**	49-56	Nov. 1844
113	644-648	57-80	Jan. 1846

All parts contain 6 pls, except for those marked * = 3, ** = 5, φ = 7, † = 4